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ABSTRACT

An overview of postsecondary education in the People's Republic of China is presented, based on the experiences of 38 visiting U.S. community college faculty members and administrators who met with Chinese educators at several college campuses in July 1987. First, the paper explains the differences in curricula and admissions for the following three sectors of Chinese post-secondary education: (1) four-year regular universities, which because of lack of space and resources can only accept a small percentage of qualified students; (2) advanced professional and vocational schools with 2- and 3-year curricula, which generally admit students with work experience for tuition-paid advanced study in their field of employment; and (3) newer polytechnic colleges, which are similar to U.S. community colleges. Next, the paper describes several colleges, including the Beijing Short-Term College of Economic Management and Finance, which focuses on instruction in economics, finance, accounting, and administration; Harbin College, a polytechnic operating under the authority of the municipal government; Heilongjiang University, a comprehensive university with an evening division teaching applied principles in administration, business management, library administration, applied mathematics, chemistry, optics, computers, microcomputers, and languages; and Guangzhou University, a comprehensive short-term college with an adult education division designed to train middle and top-level managers. The final sections describe China's Television Universities, which since their establishment in 1979, have served more than 590,000 full-time and 400,000 part-time students. Concluding remarks highlight problems and advances in Chinese education. (MDB)

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Margaret D. Williams

In July 1987 a group of 38 community college faculty members and administrators visited the People's Republic of China as a delegation sponsored by the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International. The group held 13 meetings with Chinese educators and visited over a dozen Chinese campuses. Because we represented American community colleges, we were most interested in short-term education in China.

China's drive toward modernization--in agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology--requires that middle managers and technicians be trained to help bring China into the 21st century. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1977) put a stop to vocational education (as well as to most other forms of education), but by 1985, 36 percent of secondary school students were in agricultural, vocational, or technical schools.

China has a population of 1.05 billion people. Prior to the Communist takeover in 1949, there were a total of 205 institutions of higher education enrolling 120,000 students. In 1986 there were 1054 institutions with an enrollment of 1.88 million. These institutions fall into three major categories: four-year regular universities, advanced professional and vocational schools with two- to three-year curricula, and post-doctoral research programs.

To enter the regular university system, a student must take the unified national examination, which is administered country-wide

for three days every July. It covers the arts, Chinese and a foreign language, mathematics, geography, science and engineering. Because of lack of space and of financial resources, only a very small percentage of qualified students can be accepted at regular universities. This fact has created a demand for alternative types of education, thus the short-term colleges.

Few current high school graduates are admitted to the short-term colleges. Instead, these students must work several years and be recommended by their work unit for further study in the field of their current employment. When they return to their work unit, they will be promoted. Tuition is paid by the work unit. As a result of this system, a person in one work unit cannot sign up to study in another field, for workers in China do not change occupations.

Some of the newer polytechnic colleges are supported by funds from the World Bank. These schools, quite similar to U.S. community colleges, do enroll recent high school graduates. They must pay tuition, do not live on campus, and are not guaranteed jobs the way students at regular universities are. Faculty members report that these students are more highly motivated than university students, who know that they have a job for life when they graduate.

One of the colleges we visited was Beijing Short-Term College of Economic Management and Finance. In the 29 years since its founding, it has trained 30,000 cadres. "Cadre" is the term the Chinese use for bureaucrats or managers--the people who really run China. At this college, there are four departments: economics, finance, accounting and administration. Courses run from one week to three years, and the college offers college-level courses, secondary

school courses, as well as single-course continuing education courses. They also use on-the-job training, and in many courses they use the case study method of instruction. The library houses 90,000 books. There are 100 professional, full-time teachers, 40 part-time teachers and lecturers, and many visiting professors. At this particular college students are selected in a variety of ways: the unified examination, exams at the local level, and referral by the work unit. Graduation requirements include an on-the-job evaluation and an examination on the fixed curriculum. In order to be accepted here, students must have a minimum of five years' work experience.

Harbin College in the northeast of China is a municipal college under the authority of the municipal government. It is one of the 17 polytechnics in China with money from the World Bank. Harbin College was established in May of 1983 and has 2,750 students, 850 full time and 1,900 spare time. The faculty numbers 276--144 teachers, 10 professors and associate professors, 41 lecturers, and 53 from other universities invited to teach here. They teach 15 subjects in 5 departments and have 16 laboratories.

Although Heilongjiang University is a comprehensive university, it has an evening division which was founded in 1980 and which enrolls 2,700 students. The evening school has 18 specialties which teach applied principles: administration, business management, library administration, applied mathematics, chemistry, optics, computers, micro-computers, and languages. These courses range from 3 to 5 years in length. Ninety percent of all evening students come straight from their work units. The remaining 10 percent have just graduated from high school, and the college will recommend them to

work units following graduation. Though in name it is an evening school, classes are held both day and evening. Age limits for the evening school are from high school through 40. (There is no opportunity for people between 40 and 55 to attend higher education in China.) Tuition for evening school is equal to one and a half month's salary, which the work unit pays. If a student should fail, he/she would have to pay the tuition. In the evening school, there are NO elective courses, and the 10 percent of the students who are recent high school graduates must select in advance the training they want for job preparation. The professors in the evening sshool are the same as in the day school. Faculty educational levels were hard to pin down. In the English department, for example, "a few" have doctorates, and five have master's degrees from the United States. Of the nine English faculty, two are professors and seven are associate professors. Faculty members are selected according to their academic and moral qualifications. These latter include, "They must trust the party and love their country and show that they don't break discipline or the law; they must be persons with a strong sense of responsibility and serious toward study." Faculty salaries vary with the ranks, and a full professor makes about 200 to 350 yuan a month ($54 to $94). Unlike American colleges, there is a limit to how long students may take to finish their degrees. They cannot drop in and out unless there is a health problem and they receive special permission. A student may fail a final exam once, but not twice, or he/she is out.

Guangzhou University, in the city Americans know as Canton, was founded in 1983 and has 2,000 students (1,100 regular, 800 adult, and 300 in short-term classes). In many respects it is similar to U.S.

community colleges, and it is the only comprehensive short-term college in Guangzhou. It received a $1.69 million loan from the World Bank. The textbooks used here are written in China, but one teacher we spoke to said there are also a few from the United States and Great Britain. At Guangzhou University students may study English, Japanese, or Esperanto.

Guangzhou also has an adult education college designed to train middle and top managers (cadres) for the province, Guangdong Institute for Economic Administrative Cadres. It is under the jurisdiction of the State Economic Commission and is also connected with the China Enterprise Management Development Center. Courses range from two months' to two years' duration. Most students receive computer training, and they are just beginning a course in Information Management. Cadres who are going to other countries also receive training in the culture of those countries.

The Television University is a type of educational institution which seems to be unique to China. In 1979 the Central TV University was founded, and in addition, 28 provinces have television universities. There are 540 branches, with 1,400 stations in the provinces, and 30,000 classes are offered via this medium. The objective of the TV University is to telecast courses throughout the country, spnsored by the State Education Commission. Provincial and municipal TV Universities are sponsored locally. In the years since 1979, 590,000 students have studied full-time through television, plus 400,000 part-time. Television Universities enroll high school graduates who cannot enter the regular universities because of their failure to pass the unified examination. These students do NOT have a

guaranteed job following graduation, and they may decide for themselves what course to study. The programs are broadcast on open networks; so the programs come into all homes which have television sets. Of course, the vast majority of Chinese homes do not have television sets; so the branches provide a place for students to gather to watch the programs. At these branches, tutors are available to help students understand problems, to give the next assignments, and to administer exams. Textbooks are provided by the Central TV University, and teachers are also chosen by CTVU. Generally, they are among China's finest professors. Students working toward a diploma must take an entrance examination, but those taking courses for continuing education get just certificates of course completion, and no exam is needed for these students. A new channel was opened in 1987; so there is now broadcasting 12 hours a day seven days a week. CTVU courses are broadcast in the evening, while day broadcasts are for non-formal education courses. Course content includes psychology, education, mathematics, languages, etc. There are also seven courses for middle school teachers as well as in-service courses for teachers. The World Bank has also funded the television universities, and all budget comes from the State Education Commission. There is no tuition for Central Television University, but there is a small tuition cost for students at the provincial television universities. The Central TV University has a full-time staff of 620.

At present, the production facilities for the Central TV University are housed in an old storage building. Here sits $7 million worth of state-of-the-art television and radio equipment, which is badly under-under-utilized because there are only 13 technicians, of

whom only six are adequately trained. In spite of the problems, they have produced over 200 programs, and last year over one million English textbooks were purchased by students.

At Heilongjiang TV University, over 35,000 students have graduated at the college level since 1979. Tutors at the TV University must have at least a bachelor's degree, and some of the tutors are adjunct faculty from other universities. Courses offered at Heilongjiang TV university are 60 percent produced by the Central TV University in Beijing and 40 percent locally produced. At this point, there is no interactive TV teaching. Videotapes of the lectures are available if a student misses a class. If a student fails an exam, he/she may take a make-up exam after one month's further study. There are 20 to 40 students per class, and fulltime students take four courses per semester. The people we talked to said they have no estimate of how many people watch the programs without credit.

Founded in 1960, Shanghai Television University is one of the oldest TV universities. It, like most educational institutions, was closed during the Cultural Revolution. Although housed in a temporary facility, it has 40,000 students with 22 specialties and 200 courses. Most of the students do most of their work through self study, although there are some tutors and private coaching. Students may attend full or part time. For the most part, the students are in-service workers. In Shanghai, there are 150 study centers, with 612 study classes, and each center has an average of 30 faculty members. Development of new courses happens when a local industry determines a need for a new skill. There is not enough hands-on experience in the technical courses taught by television, for there are not enough labs; so

students must go to other universities to do experiments. At this television university, there are no age limits, but students must have two years on the job prior to entrance.

Like education in the United States, Chinese education also faces many problems. Among them are the fact that state control is too tight; there is a limited range of subjects taught, with need for more students to study liberal arts; a tremendous shortage of qualified teachers exists, and limited space still keeps many qualified students out of the educational system. In spite of the problems, however, China has made giant strides in providing education for its huge population. Prior to 1949, when the Communists took over, only one of five Chinese had any education, and the illiteracy rate was 80 percent. Now that rate has dropped to just over 20 percent, and millions of people are studying at some level.

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